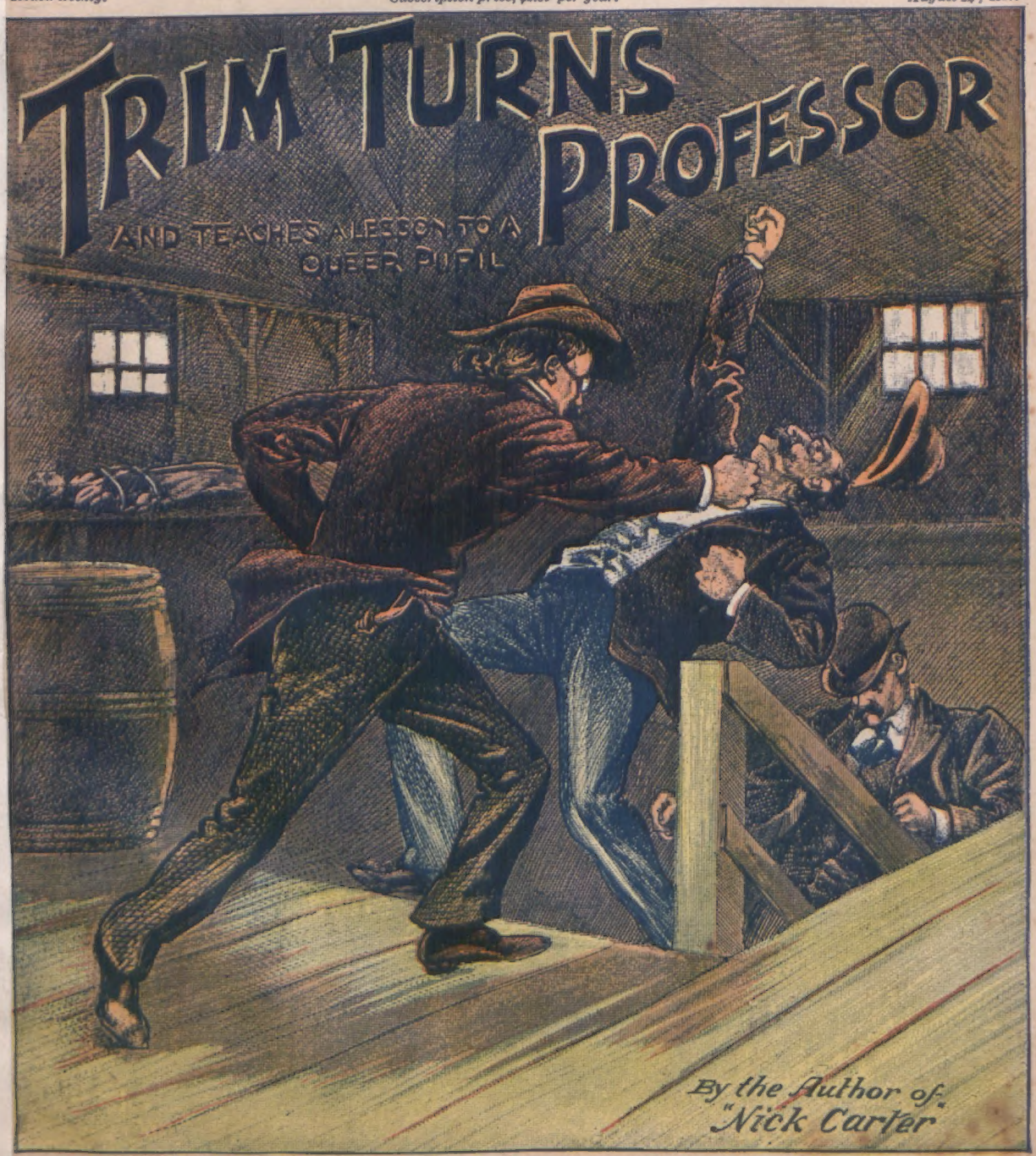
NEW NICK CARTER WEEKLY

No. 33. STREET & SMITH, Publishers. NEW YORK. 29 Rose St., N. Y. 5 Cents.

Entered according to Act of Congress in the year 1897 by Street & Smith, in the office of the Librarian of Congress, Washington, D. C.
Entered as second class matter at the New York, N. Y., Post Office.
Issued weekly. *Subscription price, $2.50 per year.* *August 14, 1897.*

TRIM TURNS PROFESSOR

AND TEACHES A LESSON TO A QUEER PUPIL



By the Author of "Nick Carter"

TRIM TURNED QUICKLY ABOUT AND GAVE DUKE A SWINGING BLOW SQUARELY UPON THE JAW.

WEEKLY

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TRIM TURNS PROFESSOR AND . . . . . TEACHES A LESSON TO A QUEER PUPIL.

By the Author of "NICK CARTER."

CHAPTER I.

LIVE TIMES AT THE BEACH.

"Old Orchard Beach, Maine, June, 189—.
"Nick Carter, Esq., New York—
"Come quick, or send Trim.
"(Signed) Avery."

When the great detective had read this dispatch he handed it to Trim, remarking:

"You're as much in demand as I am my boy, and you'd better get a move on."

"All right," Trim answered, "who's Avery?"

"He's an old friend of mine. I've done business for him two or three times, and he knows me so well that he wouldn't send for me unless the matter was important."

"Is he an hotel-keeper?"

"Yes. He has a place in Florida which he runs during the winter season, and in the summer he takes the Summit House at Old Orchard.

"It's one of the leading houses there if not the best, and most of his guests are wealthy people who go there for the entire season."

"I don't suppose I need to know any more," Trim remarked as he glanced at his watch. "You couldn't very well tell me anything more anyhow for that telegram is beautifully short."

"Well," responded Nick, "the telegram suggests some things. According to the marks on it I see that it was filed at eight o'clock this morning and it is not yet nine. It shows that the message was put through with a rush.

"Now, when a message is filed from a hotel as early as that it suggests that something has happened in the night, doesn't it?"

"Yes, and it also suggests that it was something concerning one of the guests."

"How do you make that out, Trim?"

"Why, if there was something wrong with the hotel itself, if the office safe had been robbed, for example, it's likely that the landlord would have known of it much earlier and the telegram, if sent, would have been filed at seven, or even six o'clock.

"The fact that it is filed at eight must mean that one of the guests has reported something to the landlord at the breakfast table."

"That's good reasoning," said Nick, "but, on the other hand, it's fair to suppose that Avery spent some little time in an investigation of his own before deciding to send so far as New York for a detective."

"If he's acquainted with you he wouldn't waste any time about that."

"That's true, too, but there's no use of speculating about it. It's a thousand to

one that any guess we should make here would prove to be wrong.

"I suppose you're ready to start?"

"Got to put a hat on," Trim answered, with a smile. "I shall take the ten o'clock limited," he added, with another glance at his watch.

"That's right," said Nick, "and if the train gets into Boston on time and you're lucky in getting hold of a good cabman you'll be able to cross the city and catch an express train that leaves the Union Depot at this time of the year at three-thirty, landing its passengers at Old Orchard at seven o'clock or thereabouts.

"That's the quickest you can do it in, and at the worst you'll be able to catch a train that will bring you to the beach by nine this evening."

"Of course I shall catch the express if possible," said Trim.

There was nothing further to be said about the matter, and in a short time Trim was on his way to the Grand Central Station, which he left at ten o'clock on the limited express for Boston.

The train arrived at the Hub on time, and Trim had no difficulty in hiring a cab that conveyed him across the city to the Union station in time for the Portland express.

In fact, he had a few minutes to spare which he put in in buying copies of the Boston evening papers.

He thought that possibly the matter that Avery had telegraphed about might have become general news by this time, and that the papers would give him some idea of what sort of a case he was going to work upon.

He did not find anything in the newspapers that told of crime at the beach, although there was a rather long dispatch from Old Orchard that described an affair of some excitement.

There is no need to quote the article here, but as it mentioned persons whom Trim afterwards met, it may be well to give the substance of it.

It seemed that among the guests at the beach was a young man, some of the papers referred to him as a boy, named Edward Mead.

This young man was described as a student who was turning his summer vacation to some account by continuing his studies under the guidance of a certain professor.

It was by no means certain what the professor's actual name was because each of the papers had it differently.

In one he was called Skinner, in another Spinner, and still another Stemmler, and one paper got so far away from the others as to refer to him as Phinney.

However he spelled his name, it appeared that the professor and his pupil had gone to the beach the day before to bathe.

It was a fashionable hour for bathing, and hundreds of persons were frolicking in the surf.

A party of pleasure-seekers cruising along shore in a cat-boat came close in, to get the excitement of rocking up and down upon the waves of the beach.

This was dangerous sport for them, because if they should permit their boat to get as far as the line of breakers it would almost certainly be capsized.

The danger was increased by certain mischief-loving bathers, who swam out to the boat, caught hold of the gunwale and pulled her almost upon her beam ends.

This was fun for the pleasure-seekers, but the skipper of the boat did not enjoy the prospect of being capsized, and accordingly he steered the craft about and headed for the open sea.

Most of the bathers promptly let go and swam or waded back to shore; one, however, caught hold of the stern of the boat and held on. This was young Edward Mead.

There was a good breeze blowing from land and the cat-boat went rapidly across the waves.

The skipper told Mead that he'd better drop off, but the young fellow answered that he would go out a little distance so as to have the fun of a long swim back.

The skipper made no objection to this, for he supposed naturally that Mead was an expert swimmer.

This was not the case, for although Mead could get on in the water well enough when there was a chance to stop and rest every few minutes, he was not accustomed to long-distance swimming, and he did not realize how far the cat-boat had taken him out when at last he let go and turned back.

At that time he was not less than a half a mile from the line of breakers.

His action had attracted no especial attention on shore, for it is common enough for a swimmer to do just what he did; but the professor with the doubtful name was evidently very anxious.

He had been sitting pretty far up the beach allowing the wash of the breakers to roll partly over him, but not venturing into the real surf while Mead and the others were fooling with the cat-boat.

When the others let go and Mead allowed the boat to carry him out, the professor had started out and ran into the surf, calling to his pupil to come back.

If Mead heard, he paid no attention to the man.

When the young man at last let go, the professor ran wildly around trying to induce somebody to get a boat and go out after him.

There was no boat to be had, and most people laughed at the old man's anxiety.

The professor, however, knew that there was reason for anxiety, and he watched with painful nervousness as his pupil's head came nearer and nearer to the surf line.

"I don't believe," the professor exclaimed to somebody who stood near him, "that he'll have strength enough to get in."

With this, he plunged into the surf and began to swim out.

He was none too soon, for shortly after he started young Mead suddenly disappeared beneath the water, rising a moment later and thrashing his arms wildly; then everybody who was looking on knew that the young swimmer was exhausted.

Several others immediately started out to help, but the Professor was ahead of them and came up to the young man first.

He caught him as he was about to sink the third time, and with a fine exhibition of strength and skill, kept the young man's head above water while he swam with him back to shore.

It was a very successful feat and all the papers spoke highly of the professor's courage and strength.

It proved that young Mead was not injured in the least by his experience, and the professor became the hero of the place.

"Pity," thought Trim, with a smile, "that a man who has won so much glory for himself shouldn't be able to get his name straight in the papers."

With an indifferent wonder whether he would come across the professor and his pupil, Trim laid the newspapers aside and thought of other things during the rest of the journey.

There is always a big crowd at the Old Orchard Station when a train comes in, and there was no exception at the time of Trim's arrival.

It was just after the dinner hour at the many hotels and hundreds of guests had come down to greet new arrivals.

As Trim stepped from the train his attention was attracted by a loud chorus of shouts and yells.

He saw that it came from a large party of young men who were greeting one of their friends, a man, who had arrived on the same train that Trim did.

They made such a racket that for a moment nothing else could be heard, not even the loud hissing of the locomotive blowing off steam.

Trim edged his way through the crowd toward a line of hotel carriages intending to take one that he saw marked Summit House.

He had come near the edge of the platform when the cheering of the young men and the hissing of the locomotive ceased together for just an instant and the entire crowd was startled by another cry:

"Stop thief! Catch him! Stop thief!"

There was a commotion near Trim and of course he turned his eyes in that direction.

He saw a tough-looking young fellow dart away from a group of ladies with something in his hand.

An elderly man was pushing through the crowd and trying to make after him.

It was the elderly man who was shouting "stop thief" at the top of his lungs.

The fugitive, being younger and spryer, dodged through the fringe of people on the outskirts of the crowd before they were fully aware of what was up, darted in among the waiting carriages and disappeared around a corner of the station.

Trim's trained eye took in the situation at a glance and he also saw just what thief was intending to do.

"I haven't been invited to join this game," he said to himself, "but I reckon I'll take a hand just this once for the fun of the thing."

There was an amused smile upon his face as he broke away from the crowd that was now beginning to surge for the corner of the station, where the fugitive had disappeared, and ran around to the other side.

The thief, getting in among the waiting carriages, had startled the horses so that every driver there had all he wanted to do to keep his animals still.

Then the thief quickly doubled on his tracks, returned to the station and leaped into the window of the baggage room.

It was his intention to go through this room to the platform, cross the tracks and escape into the crooked alleys between the several hotels there.

He could have done this probably without difficulty if it had not been for Trim, for the crowd had pressed toward the other end of the station, leaving the platform near the baggage-room almost empty.

It happened, though, that after the thief had leaped in at the window and ran across the baggage-room to the door he fell right into the detective's arms.

"You're it," said Trim, with a laugh, as he caught the thief by the wrists and gave him a trip that brought him to his knees.

The young tough looked at his captor in a frightened way and tried to drop what he was carrying, but the detective's fingers closed over his hand and held it fast.

"You should never throw away evidence, sonny," remarked Trim.

"Let me go!" the other gasped, trying vainly to break away.

Trim held quietly but with the strength of a young giant, and the fellow was still kneeling before him when the crowd began to see what had happened and turned that way.

The elderly man was almost the first to arrive.

"Thank goodness, you've caught him," he cried, "the miserable pickpocket!"

"Has he got anything of yours?" asked Trim.

"I think so," replied the old man, excitedly. "We'll have him searched at the police station and see. Here, officer, this way."

The last words were directed to a rather dull-looking man with a police badge on his coat who was hurrying up with the rest of the crowd.

"Aha!" said the officer, pompously, "I've got you at last. "You're my prisoner."

Trim looked at the policeman with a queer smile and then letting go the pickpocket's hands remarked, dryly:

"Take him, he's yours!"

The thief instantly sprang to his feet, dropped what he had in his hands and tried to dart away.

The blundering policeman could not stop him and it is quite possible that the fellow would have made his escape if again it had not been for Trim.

The latter seeing that the pickpocket was more than a match for the policeman gave one jump, caught him by the collar, swung him around and fairly threw him into the policeman's arms, who then proceeded as fast as he knew how-to put on a pair of handcuffs.

With a great show of authority, the policeman started up the platform with his prisoner to take him to the station.

Some one picked up what the thief had dropped; it proved to be a purse that was claimed by a lady in the crowd.

She was told to come to the station and prove her property.

"You come along, too, professor," said the policeman, addressing the elderly man. "If you think he's got anything of yours."

"I'm sure of it," the professor answered. "I felt a hand in my pocket and turning around I saw this fellow edging away. Immediately afterward I saw him snatch that purse from a lady's hand.

"Then I started after him, but we would all have lost him if it hadn't been for this young man here."

He indicated Trim with these words and the officer said:

"You come along, too, mister."

Trim shrugged his shoulders.

He had no further interest in the mat-

ter except that he was a little curious to know whether this elderly man was the professor referred to in the newspapers.

"I suppose this officer represents the law here," he said to himself, "and if he says come along I'd better come."

Trim went to the station and told the chief who was in charge what he had done and seen.

The professor and the others told their stories and when the thief was searched a pocketbook belonging to the professor was found upon him.

Of course each of the witnesses had to give a name to the chief, and Trim's curiosity was satisfied when the elderly man gave his as William Spinner.

"Hardly need to ask your name," responded the chief, writing it down, "for everybody here knows you now.

"What is your name?"

This question was addressed to Trim, who, thinking it best to conceal his identity until he had talked with landlord Avery, answered that his name was John Lane.

The ceremony at the police station occupied but little time, and after the prisoner was locked up Trim went on to the Summit House.

There he made himself known to the landlord, who at once asked him to step into the private office.

"You're Trim Carter, I suppose," said the landlord, "for I don't believe that even Nick could disguise himself so that I shouldn't know him."

"Perhaps not," Trim answered, "but no matter about that, I'm Trim. What's the case?"

"I'm afraid you'll find it a rather mixed-up affair and not very satisfactory at the start," answered Avery, "but I believe, nevertheless, that you'll manage to keep busy for a few days.

"In the first place Old Orchard this season seems to be infested with petty thieves; they're bothering my hotel and I learn that some of the other houses on the beach have been troubled in the same way. That's a thing that I'd like to have stopped."

"Shouldn't wonder if I've made a beginning in that already" said Trim.

"How so?"

"Why, I just helped capture a pickpocket at the depot."

"I'm glad to hear it; but you may be pretty sure that he is only one of several and I feel that the thieves that are operating here are no ordinary pickpockets.

"However, that isn't the main matter. I should hardly have sent to New York for you if that had been the only thing, although I'm glad enough to have you here on that account."

"What's the other thing then?"

"One of my most important guests reported to me this morning that an attempt had been made to murder him during the night."

CHAPTER II.

BANKER MEAD'S TROUBLES.

"That's serious enough!" said Trim, "who's the victim?"

"You mean the intended victim, of course?"

"Yes."

"His name is Mead."

"Mead! Mead!" interrupted Trim, trying to think where he had heard the name, "why! didn't I read something about him in the evening papers on the way up from Boston?"

"That was his son," returned Avery. "The guest of whom I speak is John W. Mead, a retired banker.

"He is here for the summer with his son and the son's tutor.

"Old Mead is a good deal of an invalid; he sticks to his room most of the time, crawling out rarely on pleasant days to sit on the verandah or take a short drive along the beach."

"What has happened to him?" asked Trim.

"I only know what I've been told about it," returned Avery, "and so far as I understand it the thing has a queer look."

"Tell me just how you learned about it."

"Well, it was at an early hour this morning, sometime between six and seven, I should say, when I was aroused by a violent knocking on my door.

"I asked what was the matter, and one of the hall-boys answered that Professor Spinner wanted to see me in a hurry about something."

"Are you sure it was a hall-boy who spoke?"

"Oh, yes, I not only recognized his voice but got up and opened the door and looked out. He stood there waiting for an answer."

"Go on."

"I asked him what was the manner, but the hall-boy said he didn't know but that the professor said it was very important, and of course I went downstairs as soon as I could, for although I suspected nothing of this matter, the professor represented one of my best guests and I was anxious to please him.

"When I got down to the office the professor was not here. The clerk told me he had gone to Mr. Mead's room, leaving a request that I should follow him at once.

"I did so."

"Where is Mr. Mead's room?" Trim asked.

"At the southwest corner of the hotel one flight up. It's a large room with four windows, two to the south and two to the west.

"All of these windows look out upon the roof of the veranda. From the edge of that roof to the ground there's a drop of from fifteen to twenty feet varying with the slope of a hill at that point."

"I suppose I see what's coming," remarked Trim. "You're telling me about the windows and the veranda because somebody had entered the banker's room?"

"So he says."

"And do you doubt him?"

"Oh, no, not at all. Understand me, Carter, I don't profess to have any head for unraveling mysteries, and I suppose it would be better for me to tell you Mead's story just as he told it to me without giving my own opinion about it?"

"I think that would be better."

"Very well. When I entered the room Mead was in bed and the professor stood by trying to calm him.

"Our conversation had hardly begun before young Edward, the banker's son, came in from an adjoining room half dressed.

"He had been aroused by the professor ——"

"One moment," said Trim. "Do those three persons have adjoining rooms?"

"Yes. The old man's is at the corner, then next to his on the south side is the son Edward's room and beyond that on the same side is Professor Spinner's."

"Three rooms in a row, then?"

"Exactly."

"Go on."

"Old Mead looked wild and haggard. His lips twitched nervously, and I could see that his hands were clutching the bed clothes.

" 'I've got to be protected!' were his first words."

"What did you say to that?"

"I don't know exactly what I answered, but something to the effect that I should do everything in my power to accommodate him and of course I asked him what was the matter.

" 'My room was entered during the night,' he said, 'and I've narrowly escaped being murdered.'

"Now you know, Carter, that's not a pleasant thing for an hotel keeper to hear. Outside of my respect for Mead and my wish that he should be comfortable, there are my other guests, you see.

"It instantly flashed upon me that if it should be known in the hotel that one guest had suffered in this way, there would be a general alarm, and I should be left without business for the rest of the season."

"Did Mead go on to tell you clearly what had happened?"

"Well, yes, he did pretty well; he pulled himself together, and the professor, who had already heard the story, helped him out.

"Mead said that he waked some time in the night with a strange feeling that somebody was in the room.

" 'I was wide awake in an instant,' he said, 'and I'm sure that my thoughts were perfectly clear. I listened for just a moment, expecting to hear a repetition of the same noise that had awakened me.'

"I asked him what that sound was and he said he didn't know. Then he continued:

" 'I was so convinced that there was somebody in my room that I sat up in bed in order to reach the bell rope.'

"You must understand, Carter, that the

bell from his room is pulled by a long cord with a tassel on the end that reaches down over the head of the bed.

"Well, Mead said he sat up and reached his hands for that cord, and his fingers had just touched the tassel when his wrist was suddenly caught and his arm was brought quickly down to the bed; at the same instant a hand was pressed over his mouth.

"It was dark, of course, and he could distinguish nothing more than the vague outlines of a man bending over the bed. Naturally he was terribly alarmed."

"I hope he didn't faint away?" said Trim.

"Not just then. He says he struggled a bit, but speedily saw that his strength was unequal to that of his assailant."

At this moment a waiter came into the private office bearing a tray filled with dishes.

"You haven't had your dinner, have you?" asked Avery.

"No," answered Trim.

"I presume not, and so I ordered dinner sent in here. I thought that you could eat while I continued my story.

"I've had my own dinner, and will keep on talking while you're at work."

There was then a pause of several minutes until the waiter had set the table and withdrawn. Then Trim began to eat while landlord Avery resumed his account.

"As soon as the intruder saw that Mead had given up struggling he released his hand a little from the banker's mouth and said:

" 'Breathe one word aloud and I'll choke the life out of you!'

"At that moment I guess that Mead was too scared to do anything. He lay perfectly still, and after a little pause, during which the intruder stood motionless, the banker managed to ask what he wanted.

" 'Never you mind,' was the reply. 'I'll get what I want, and it'll be the worse for you if you make any fuss about it.'

"Now, the old man had a revolver under his pillow, but under the circumstances it was of no use to him.

"The man who had entered the room evidently suspected that there might be a weapon concealed somewhere, for while he kept one hand over the banker's mouth, he began to reach around under the pillow with the other.

"Presently he found the revolver, took it out and thrust it into his pocket.

"Then he ordered Mead to lie still at the peril of being shot if he should make a noise, and went over to the bureau.

"He set a dark lantern on it, opened the drawers and began to rummage.

"The rays of the lantern fell upon the mirror over the bureau in such a way that Mead could see the reflection of the man at work.

"He observed then that the man was completely masked."

Trim gave a low groan.

"What do you think of it?" asked Avery.

"Well," returned Trim, slowly. "It looks like a thorough-going scheme. Go on."

The landlord saw that Trim was not giving expression to his thoughts on the matter.

It struck the detective as very peculiar that a robber, even if he were thoroughly masked, should set his lantern in such a way that the victim would see a reflection in the mirror.

"That's either remarkably careless," said Trim, "or it shows a hidden purpose."

Avery continued:

"Mead watched the man for a moment or two and then the dark lantern was moved to another place and he could no longer see the reflection, but he could still see the fellow rummaging here and there.

"Once in awhile the intruder looked over his shoulder as if to see that Mead was lying quiet.

"The banker thought to take advantage of this situation and so he cautiously worked himself to an upright position again in order to give a pull at the bell cord.

"He had just got his shoulders high enough up to be able to reach the cord when the intruder flashed the light upon him.

"It was only a flash! The instant the light was out, the man leaped noiselessly

across the room and caught the banker by the throat.

"There was no use for Mead to struggle or try to cry out; he could do nothing. He was was either choked or frightened into insensibility.

"When he awaked it was daylight. Of course he rang the bell at once then, and when a hall-boy answered it he directed that the professor be summoned.

"Professor Spinner, therefore, was aroused by the boy and went directly into Mr. Mead's room.

"Mead then told him the story, the professor hunted me up and now you know all I know about it except that the banker has got it into his head that he will be attacked again."

"What reason does he give for that feeling?"

"Nothing clear. He simply says he is sure of it, and is in great alarm."

"What was stolen?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing at all?"

"Not a thing so far as we can learn, and that, taken in connection with the fact that there have been a good many small robberies hereabouts during the past three weeks is very peculiar."

"It's easy enough," said Trim, "to rig up a theory to fit the case, though I'm not at all sure that the theory would help us any."

"Well, for example what theory?"

"Suppose," Trim answered, "that Mead has in his possession certain papers that might be of value to somebody!

"That fact might account for the invasion of the room and a search of the drawers and so forth without the theft of money or ordinary valuables, and if the man didn't find his documents it would account for Mead's fear that he would be attacked again."

"I thought of something like that myself," returned Avery, "and I spoke of it to Mead but he would neither admit nor deny the theory. He simply repeated his belief that he would be troubled again and demanded that I protected him.

"I assured him that I would do so and told him that I would send for the best detective in the country.

"He wanted to know who I had in mind, and when I told him he seemed to be very much relieved.

" 'Don't let him waste a minute in getting here,' he said. So after I had talked with him somewhat longer and had examined his room as well as I knew how, I telegraphed to Nick.

"Of course nothing has been said about it in the hotel, and the only persons who have any knowlege of the affair are Mead and his son, the professor and myself."

"I hope they all see the necessity of keeping quiet about it?" said Trim.

"Oh, they do!"

"Do the others know that a detective has been summoned?"

Avery smiled.

"I've had dealings with Nick Carter," he answered, "and have learned that Nick always prefers to work unknown as far as possible.

"I've seen him get pretty hot when his real identity was made known to persons who couldn't by any possibility be guilty of crime.

"For that reason I took pains to suggest sending for a detective when the Professor and young Edward were out of the room; therefore, neither of them is aware that you have been sent for."

"That's good," said Trim, "but both of them must be rather excited about the thing, and I should think that both of them would demand that some protection be given to the old man?"

"Oh, yes, and that has been done. Hereafter Professor Spinner will sleep in the same room with Mr. Mead, and except for a few minutes at a time, one or both of them have remained in the room all day."

"Is that all the story?" asked Trim.

"Every bit of it."

"Then suppose you tell me now what you think of it."

"My thoughts would be worth nothing compared with yours, Trim."

"That's not certain, but, anyhow, let's hear what you think."

"Well, then, I've told you the situation of the room and I ought to have added that the door from the banker's room into the corridor was securely locked and bolted on the inside.

"The only other way to get into the room was through his son Edward's.

There is a door from Edward's room to his father's that could be opened easily, for I saw Edward himself open it while I was talking with the old man.

"But Edward says that the door from his own room into the corridor was locked and bolted. So then it's pretty hard to see how anybody could have entered the room."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Trim, "I entered a room myself not long ago that was a thousand times harder to get at than that."

"How did you do it?"

"It would take too long to tell," Trim answered, "but when I say that the room was eight stories from the ground, and that there was neither fire escape, veranda or tree anywhere near, that I didn't use a ladder, but that I got in from the outside, you may understand that I don't regard the problem of getting into Banker Mead's room was very difficult."*

"That's all right, Carter," responded Avery slowly, "but we expect any one of your name and business to do difficult things, or else we wouldn't ask you to work for us.

"The point is that the situation was a mighty difficult one for any ordinary burglar."

"I presume we are dealing with a burglar who isn't ordinary," Trim remarked.

"If we are dealing with a burglar at all!" responded Avery.

"Hey? What do you mean by that?"

"Why, it's just this, Trim, I can't help suspecting that nobody entered that room at all.

"The old man is sickly and nervous, perhaps he suffered from nightmare."

"What was the condition of the bureau drawers?" asked Trim.

"They seemed to me to be in pretty good order."

The detective thought a moment and then remarked:

"A thief who was looking for some one article that he couldn't find might leave things in good order; anyhow, the next thing to do is to get a look at the room and have a talk with Mead.

"Perhaps I can induce him to throw suspicion on somebody by telling me whether there is anything in his possession that is of particular value to some other person.

"But speaking of that I suppose you can see what a detective would likely suspect the very first."

"I don't think I do," answered Avery.

"You say that the door between Edward's room and his father's——"

"Oh, you think that possibly the son himself might be the burglar? You'd better give that up, Trim."

"I didn't say it yet."

"No, but you think of keeping your eyes on the young fellow?"

"I certainly intend to study him."

"That won't do any harm, but I haven't the least idea that young Edward had anything to do with the affair or any knowledge of it.

"I know how it often happens that the most innocent looking people sometimes prove to be criminals, but you'd have to bring very severe proof indeed to convince me that that boy would be capable of any such crime."

"I'm not going to suspect the boy until I know more about it," said Trim, "but it seems to me you use queer language about him. What do you mean by saying that he wouldn't be capable of such a thing?"

"Why, just this! He's a good enough fellow, and if he's simply playing lawn tennis or idling around in a bicycle suit, he looks like other men of his age, but if you get talking with him you soon discover that he's shallow.

"He's not a fool, Trim, but he isn't smart and bright. I presume you understand me? I'm not saying that young Edward is weak-minded exactly, but——"

"You think that even if he was bad enough for it that he wouldn't have the strength of mind to commit this particular deed."

"Yes, that's it."

"I'm glad you gave me the tip about it. Now, how shall I manage to have a talk with the banker without having to be in the presence of Professor Spinner or the son?"

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*Trim referred to an investigation which he had recently made and which has been described in full in "Trim's Electric Machine," No. 31 New Nick Carter Weekly.

"I've been thinking that might give us some trouble," answered Avery, "but hello! there goes the professor and the son now. I presume they're going to take a stroll for a few minutes and this is your opportunity."

Trim followed the direction of Avery's eyes and saw through the window in the door of the private office an old man accompanied by a younger one just coming down the broad stairs that led from the main office to the second floor.

The old man he recognized at once as Professor Spinner whom he had met so unexpectedly immediately after his arrival at Old Orchard. As Trim had already had a good chance to observe him, he now directed his attention especially at the young man.

He watched the pair as they walked leisurely through the office out upon the veranda, and then started toward the plank walk to the beach.

"A train for Portland is just coming in," remarked Avery, "and a lot of people from all the hotels will go down to meet it.

"They'll probably join the crowd just for the amusement of the thing.

"I presume that Mead is resting quietly, and as it is still comparatively early in the evening he would have no objection to being left alone for a short time.

"Shall we go right up to his room?"

"Yes, it seems like a good chance!" Trim answered.

He was standing then at the private office window watching the professor and his pupil as they went toward the railroad tracks.

They were soon lost in the crowd and the darkness and so he turned and accompanied by the landlord went up to the second floor, where they turned into the west corridor and continued along it until they came to the last room.

Avery knocked there, and both he and Trim were startled by a sound of hurried footsteps from within.

This was followed instantly by a cry of alarm in a high, quivering voice.

"Help! help!" it said.

Trim tried the door, found it locked and instantly put his shoulders to it.

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed Avery, "don't break the door down for that would alarm the whole house and there would be a panic."

"If I'm here to investigate this case," answered Trim, sharply, "I've got to get in that room!"

He drew back to lunge with all his force against the door when they heard the clicking of bolts as they were drawn back and the next instant the door was opened and the banker stood trembling before them.

He glanced at them, recognized the landlord and then staggered feebly back to his bed.

Trim was already half way across the room going toward an open window.

"He went out there!" gasped the banker, feebly.

CHAPTER III.

THE BANKER'S WILL.

"What has happened now?" cried Avery.

"The same thing!" gasped the Banker. "My son and Spinner had hardly got out of the room before he stepped in from that window and threatened me in the same way——"

Trim heard as much as this while he was getting through the window to the roof of the veranda.

This roof was not less than twenty feet broad. It extended around three sides of the building.

From where he stood when he got out he could look the entire length of the west end. Nobody was in sight.

Two or three paces brought him to the corner where he could look along the southside of the building.

Electric lights placed on long poles in the grounds in front of the hotel made the entire stretch of veranda roof on the south side as light as day.

There was nobody in view.

As there had been but a few seconds between the time when the detective heard the hurried footsteps within the room and this moment when he looked along the south side of the hotel, it was perfectly plain that there had not been time enough for the criminal to run the entire length of the south side.

Trim, therefore, reasoned that the man must have made his escape either by

dropping from the veranda roof to the ground, or by entering some room near by.

Accordingly he went to the edge of the roof and looked over near the corner.

He could see that the veranda below was thoroughly lighted and that a good many people were there either lounging in chairs or walking slowly up and down. They were acting as if nothing had happened to disturb them.

"The fellow didn't drop to the ground," said Trim to himself. "If he had some of those people would surely have noticed him.

"It follows, therefore, that he must have sneaked back into his room, and I'd like to bet a hunderd dollars to a cent that he's watching me now from some of these windows.

"Now, let's see; that means that he must be also a guest in this hotel. I should, therefore, say that I'm making progress for I've got the man down to the point where I can say that he is one of the people who are staying here.

"That's better than having to look for him all over the beach."

Trim had been kneeling so that he could look over the edge of the roof at the veranda below.

He now arose and stood for a moment looking at the windows along both the south side and the west end of the building.

There were lights in some of the windows, none in others, some were open, some closed.

"I've got him down finer still!" he said to himself after a moment. He didn't have time to go further than half way the length of the southside at the most, therefore, he must be one of the persons occupying rooms within that distance or some room on the west end.

"The fact that some of these windows are closed doesn't mean anything.

"The fellow was a sharp one without doubt, and he might leave the window open through which he had gone in order to deceive anybody who should try to chase him.

"He might also light the gas instantly so as to pretend that he had not stirred from his room during the last half hour.

"I reckon the best thing for me to do will be to let these rooms alone for the present, but get the landlord to tell me who the occupants are, and then spot them quietly during the evening and to-morrow.

"It will be strange if I don't get some light on the matter before twenty-four hours have passed."

With this thought, Trim returned through the window to Banker Mead's room. He found the banker in a state of great excitement.

"I must have a lawyer at once!" he was saying.

"A lawyer?" returned Avery in surprise, "it isn't a lawyer that you need, but a detective and I had just come here to introduce Mr. Carter, the one I telegraphed for this morning."

Mead looked wildly at Trim.

"I'm glad enough you're here, young man," he muttered, "though I'm afraid you've come too late.

"Of course it isn't your fault, and I know the reputation of the Carters well enough to believe that you'll do everything a man can do, but I tell you that nothing will save me. I must have a lawyer."

"But what good will a lawyer do?" asked Avery, with a despairing glance at Trim.

The detective gave the landlord a sign to show that he wanted Mead to be allowed to carry out his own desires.

"A lawyer who can draw up my will for me," responded the banker, sharply.

"I'm afraid you're taking too much alarm——"

"Don't talk to me, Avery! There must be a lawyer among your guests; go and get him. I'll give him a fee big enough to pay the expenses of his vacation."

"I suppose it'll have to be some lawyer who practices in the courts of Maine?" suggested Avery, doubtfully.

"I suppose so!" interrupted Mead, sharply, "but if you haven't got a Maine lawyer, staying with you, send me some other one. I don't care where he comes from. He'll know how to draw up the kind of document I want!"

"I believe there is a lawyer from Portland here," said Avery, doubtfully, with another glance at Trim.

"Look him up, Mr. Avery," said Trim.

"and have him come here at once; meantime I can talk to Mr. Mead."

Avery accordingly withdrew and Trim sat down on the edge of the bed beside the frightened banker.

There was a wild look still in Mead's eyes as he turned them upon the detective.

"You're not having a very pleasant time of it, sir," remarked Trim, sympathetically.

"Pleasant! I should say not!" retorted Mead. "I suppose Avery has told you about my experience last night?"

"Yes, he told me, and we were just coming to the room to——"

"To look it over and see if you could find a clew! I know, and I hope you may find one, but I don't think you will, young man."

"I've worked on cases that looked more troublesome than this!" said Trim.

"Oh, I don't suspect your ability, not a bit, I'm only telling you that this conspiracy has got beyond the point where it can be stopped. I feel sure of it!"

"What makes you think that there is a conspiracy?" asked Trim.

"I feel it, that's all. What does a man come into my room and rummage around for without stealing my watch or my diamond shirt studs, or even my pocketbook, unless there's a conspiracy to destroy me?"

"If that was the case," continued Trim, "you ought to know exactly what the conspiracy is for.

"Better be frank with me, Mr. Mead; isn't there something in your possession that somebody would like to get hold of more than he would like to get hold of money?"

Mead glared at Trim a moment and then grunted.

"Wait until I've talked with my lawyer," he said.

"Very well, then," responded the detective, patiently, "tell me what happened just now."

"That's easy enough; Spinner and my son have been here all day long. Sometimes one of them would go out for a change, but never both together until a few minutes ago.

"I was feeling much easier and rather ashamed of myself for demanding that they keep guard on me so persistently and I myself suggested that they go out for a stroll.

"They did so, and it didn't seem as if the door had any more than closed upon them before somebody stepped in at that window.

"He had a mask on and he leveled a revolver at me. Of course I kept quiet."

"Did you say that you suggested that they should go out together?" asked Trim.

"Yes. The professor had been out a couple of hours before and had had an adventure with a pickpocket. He had been telling me about it, and when his story was done he began to walk up and down nervously.

"Once in a while he yawned, and I could see that he was tired of staying indoors.

'My son was yawning, too, and it made me ashamed to keep them in, so I told them to go out and get the air.

"We argued the matter a little, but at this time of the evening, with so many people stirring, it did seem as if I would be safe. Besides that, I was determined if anything happened to ring the bell instantly, but when I saw that revolver pointed at me—well—I was simply too scared to move, that's all, and now I'm going to have my property disposed of so that if anything should happen Ned will be able to possess my fortune without delay."

"It is probably well enough to make your will, Mr. Mead," said Trim, "but I hope I shall be able to prevent that will from being of any use to anybody for a good many years."

"I hope you will!" Mead answered, with a shiver, "but I doubt it very much."

There was a little further talk during which Trim gently tried to get more information about the banker's affairs, for he suspected that there was some secret matter which would account for the strange actions of the intruder who thus far had committed no robbery.

During the conversation he heard a train come in and a moment later he heard the puffing of the engine as it went on again to Portland.

The banker evaded his questions so

skilfully that at the end of the conversation Trim was no wiser than before.

In fact, he began to doubt whether, after all, there was any secret in the banker's life to account for the matter, and he was stirring his wits to discover some other theory.

Avery was gone a good many minutes. He was evidently unlucky in his search for a lawyer; at length there were footsteps in the corridor that paused by the banker's door.

Trim expected that there would be a knock, and had half risen from the bed to go to the door and unlock it when a key was put into the latch, the bolt turned back and the door was opened from outside.

It was Professor Spinner and his pupil who had just returned from their stroll.

"Well, pop," said the young man in a rather boisterous fashion, "we've taken in the usual excitement of the evening; we've seen a train go by and now, unless you want me to sit up with you I think I'll go to bed. Hello!"

The last word was uttered in surprise as the young man saw that a stranger was in the room.

Spinner looked sharply at Trim and then inquiringly at the banker.

"Go ahead, Ned, my boy," answered Mead; "if I want you I'll call you."

Ned looked doubtfully from one to another, his eyes turning doubtfully to the professor.

"It's all right, Ned," he said, "as your father says, if you're wanted I'll call you, or I shall stay in this room all night."

"Good-night, then," said Ned, starting across the room.

He was about half way across when he halted suddenly, hesitated just an instant as if he was thinking of saying something and then turned sharply about and went into his own room, closing the door behind him.

"Professor," said Mead, as soon as the door closed, "it was an awful mistake letting you go out, and I don't know what could have happened to me if this detective hadn't come along just in the nick of time."

Trim felt as if he had been struck by a cold wind. Just what he had feared had happened.

It had been his intention to warn the banker not to mention his presence even to Professor Spinner or his son, but in the excitement of pursuing the intruder to the veranda roof there had been no opportunity for it, and on his return he had thought best not to arouse the banker's fears and suspicions further until Mead should have quieted down from his excitement.

He hoped, too, that Avery had made it perfectly clear to Mead that the presence of the detective should not be made know, and besides that he had expected every minute that Avery would return with a lawyer.

The moment Trim saw the professor in the doorway he wished that he had warned the banker, but of course, there had been no chance to give him a hint and now the blunder had been made.

"Well, no matter," thought Trim, philosophically, "like as not the professor will be the best sort of help to me.

"I could see by the way he went after that pickpocket that he had nerve, and probably he's got a good head for just this sort of problem.

"I might have made myself known to him a little later anyhow, so perhaps it doesn't matter."

"You're not the hotel detective, are you?" asked the professor in surprise.

"Not exactly," returned Trim.

"I asked," said the professor, "partly because I thought I knew everybody in the house by sight, and because I recognized you. We have met before, I believe?"

"Yes," answered Trim, with a smile, "it happened that I did some professional work the minute I struck the beach."

"And it was mighty lucky for me!" exclaimed the professor, "that you were there; the regular policemen at Old Orchard don't know enough to go in when it rains." Then he turned to Mead and added:

"You are very fortunate, Mr. Mead, in having obtained the services of this man, for if I'm any judge of such things, I should say that he's a tip-top detective."

"There's no doubt of that," responded Mead, "all the Carters are!"

"Ah! is your name Carter?" asked the professor.

Trim nodded.

The professor looked at him gravely.

"We shall all feel confident, then," he said, after a moment, "that this troublesome mystery will be cleared up soon; your people have a great reputation, Mr. Carter."

"Thank you," responded Trim, "I'll try to deserve it!"

"But what is it," asked the professor, turning to Mead, "that happened during my absence?"

Trim allowed Mead to tell the story of what happened.

"Did you get sight of the man?" asked the professor of Trim.

"No," the detective answered. "I went out to the veranda roof as quick as I could, but he had flown."

"Dropped to the ground, probably," remarked the professor.

"Or jumped over the roof!" returned Trim, dryly.

Professor Spinner looked at him queerly, but if he had anything in mind to say he did not say it, for at that moment there was a knock at the door.

Spinner opened it and Avery came in with a stranger.

"It has taken me a long time," said the landlord, addressing Mead, "but I found him at last.

"Permit me to introduce Mr. Ledyard, of Portland. He is one of the best-known lawyers in Maine and will be glad to assist you."

"Give him paper and pen and draw a table up close to the bed," said Mead, sharply. "I'm glad to see you, Mr. Ledyard. I want you to draw up my will."

"I so understood, sir," answered the lawyer, "and thinking that it might save time, I went to my room for some blanks that I had in my bag, and I have here a blank form of will that it will take us but a few minutes to fill in."

"Let's see it."

The lawyer handed over a printed paper which the banker partly read.

"I suppose this is all right," he said, handing it back, "but you'll know after I tell you what I want to do.

"When I retired from business I put all my property except certain sums which are deposited in banks, into government bonds.

"I haven't any real estate to give away, I haven't any interest in corporations to tangle up matters, but every dollar of my fortune is so placed that I can make cash of it at a day's notice, see?"

The lawyer nodded.

"Now, then," continued Mead, "I want my son to have the whole of it, and I want him to get it in case of my death without delay.

"I shan't make bequests to charity, or to colleges, or to poor relations, but I shall tell Ned what I want him to do in that line, and he can make gifts after I'm gone. Is that all right?"

"You've certainly a right to dispose of your property as you see fit," returned the lawyer, "but if you want colleges or persons to benefit by your will you'll have to name them in it."

"I won't do anything of the kind!" snapped Mead. "I want Ned to have the whole thing as quick as I'm gone, and if he doesn't see fit to carry out my desires that's his lookout, so all you've got to do, Mr. Lawyer, is to draw up my will in such a way that as soon as I'm gone Ned can get the entire advantage of the estate.

"It's practically in cash now, you see, and I might give it to him if I choose."

"I should think it might be as well, Mr. Mead," suggested the professor, "to avoid the possibility of contesting the will, by giving your son the property now, or at least power to draw on it."

"No, sir! No, sir!" retorted the banker. "As long as I manage to stay alive shall keep my grip on the property; when I'm gone I want Ned to have it, so draw up the will to that effect and I'll sign it."

Trim listened with great interest to this conversation. He noted every word, hoping that something would be said to throw light upon the banker's troubles.

At that moment he could see nothing that gave him a clue to the invader of the banker's room, but later, when he began to put one thing with another he was able to look back and see a very important clew in one of the remarks.

The lawyer said he would make the will as strong as he could and proceeded to write.

He had to ask several questions, as, for example, the son's full name and age.

residence, and so on, but there was nothing in any of the answers that was of importance to Trim.

When the document was completed, Mead sat up in bed and signed it: then the lawyer said:

"Will these gentlemen do for witnesses?"

"Certainly," answered Mead, "get Carter and Avery to put their names down."

The detective and the landlord, therefore, put their names to the docuemnt, and Mead lay back with a sigh of satisfaction.

"Now," he said, "let them do their worst, but I look to you, Carter, to keep me alive until death comes in a natural way."

CHAPTER IV.

TRIM STUDIES THE PROFESSOR.

"I shall do my best," Trim answered. "With us three to guard you I think you can let your mind be easy as to any further danger just now.

"The first thing for me to do of course is to get my hands on the man who invaded your room."

"Yes, do!" exclaimed Mead.

"Have you anything in the way of a clew, Mr. Carter?" asked the professor.

"The man left no clew behind him," Trim responded, "but I don't think there'll be any great difficulty in tracing him."

"Ah! indeed! You've great confidence in your powers."

"I've had some experience," said Trim, shortly.

"That is very fortunate for us, but I think you'll not find it an easy matter to trace an unknown man, who after dropping from the roof of the veranda could quickly lose himself among a thousand strangers who are now at the beach."

"He didn't drop from the roof!"

"No, then how could he disappear so quickly?"

"There were plenty of open windows along the veranda roof through which he could enter a room and so pass on to the corridor."

"Ah! yes! yes!"

The professor seemed greatly interested.

"Plenty of windows open, you said?" he asked.

"Lots of them."

"Then I suppose you would look for the criminal among the guests of the hotel whose rooms are near by and on this floor?"

"Not necessarily, although it is possible that the man occupying the room through which the criminal passed is in league with him."

"Ah, yes! Well, that gives you a considerable field for investigation, Mr. Carter.

"I must say that I'm rather glad that I left my own window down and locked on the inside."

"Did you, though!" thought Trim. "The professor must think that I was born yesterday.

"What would be simpler than for a criminal to enter an open window, close it and lock it after him?

"I think Mead in his nervousness has hit the truth in this matter; there is undoubtedly a conspiracy of some kind against him.

"Just what it is and what is to be gained by it I don't yet see, but I'm pretty nearly willing to stake my reputation that Professor Spinner has got a hand in it."

Trim had been coming gradually to this conclusion during the conversation that accompanied the drawing up of the will.

It was for this reason that he appeared to talk freely about the case in the professor's presence.

The first thing that had turned his attention to Professor Spinner as a possible criminal was the fact that he was away from the room when the second attempt was made to enter and search it.

From what Mead had said, however, it seemed impossible that the professor himself could have been the guilty party, for the criminal must have been in Mead's room at the very moment when Trim saw Spinner and Edward passing through the hotel office below stairs.

Therefore, when Trim saw that it could not have been the professor who had entered the room he had set his thoughts to work to find another theory to account for the matter, but one of Spinner's remarks, while the will was being discussed

brought Trim back to him again. It was the professor's suggestion that if the banker wished his son to receive his money without delay it should be given to him during the banker's lifetime.

"That's a bold sugegstion," thought Trim at the time it was made. "It may be innocent, but it may mean something important and crooked."

From that time on he had studied the professor very carefully, and although Spinner said nothing that might not have been said by an innocent person, Trim grew more and more certain that the old man was mixed up in some way with the conspiracy against Mead.

"I understand," said the professor, after a short pause, "that detectives usually begin by making a thorough examination of the place where the crime was committed."

"That is usual," Trim responded, dryly.

"And you haven't had time as yet to do much looking around?"

"Not very much."

"I shall be able to show you into my own room if you think it worth while to look in there?"

"I suppose I'd better as a matter of form," Trim answered.

"I would like to make certain that you had your window locked on the inside, for if it was I shouldn't need to think of your room as one that might have been used by the criminal in making his escape."

"Come right in and look at it now!" exclaimed the professor, starting to the door.

Trim rose as if he would follow and Avery started to go along, too.

Trim gave the landlord a glance that caused him to halt.

The professor had gone into the corridor, and the detective whispered hastily:

"I must have the use of the room on the other side of the hall!"

"But it's occupied!" returned Avery.

"No matter, turn the man out!"

"Whew!"

"It's got to be done!" insisted Trim. "Make any excuse you like, but get the man out at once!"

"Are you coming?" called the professor.

"Directly," answered Trim, and then in a loud voice: "You needn't bother to come, Mr. Avery, if you're busy. This examination of the professor's room is, as I said, a mere matter of form."

"All right, then," responded Avery, taking his cue at once, "I'll look after some other matters."

Trim, therefore, went on, and when he came up to the professor at the door of his room, he said:

"I had to stop because Avery asked me a question or two, and I told him it wasn't at all necessary for him to waste his time in this matter."

"Quite right," returned the professor, "although I should be glad to have him satisfied with the looks of things."

"He'll be satisfied with what I tell him," Trim responded.

It was perfectly true that the examination of the professor's room was a mere matter of form.

Trim knew perfectly well that he would find nothing there to throw any light on the matter, but every minute with the professor gave him more time to study the man, and while he looked the room over he kept up a conversation in the course of which he hoped to hear more remarks that would indicate what the professor was up to.

It will not be necessary to repeat the conversation because after it was all over Trim could not see that the professor had said anything that was of the least importance to him.

The detective pretended to make a thorough search of the room and at last returned to the banker's room.

Avery had come in a moment before.

"I don't like this being left alone, Mr. Carter!" exclaimed Mead.

"Why! Mr. Avery is here," said Trim.

"He wasn't here until just now; for several minutes you've left me here alone."

Trim glanced inquiringly at Avery who winked and nodded.

The detective understood this to mean that the occupant of the room across the hall had been turned out.

"We won't leave you alone again, Mr. Mead," said Trim then. "You may be perfectly easy about that."

"Speaking of that," said the profes-

"I suppose we ought to make arrangements for watching with Mr. Mead.

"It was my intention to sit up with him all night, but now that there are two of us I suppose we can divide the watch."

"I reckon so," responded Trim, wondering what the professor was driving at.

"I was just thinking," Spinner went on, "that perhaps it would be the most comfortable plan for Mr. Carter if he should take his watch first.

"He might stay until midnight or one o'clock and then I would get up and take my turn."

"Any way will suit me," answered Trim, who had not the slightest intention of leaving Mead alone with the professor.

"Well, let's call it that, then," said Spinner. "There's an errand that I would like to do down at the drug store on the beach; it won't take long, but if you agree to this plan of dividing the watch, I'll go to bed when I return.

"You can call me at one o'clock or any time you like and I'll get up then and take your place."

"All right," answered Trim, carelessly, "I'll rout you out at one o'clock."

The professor yawned.

"I feel pretty sleepy," he said, "and I shall be very glad to get a few hours' rest before taking my turn, but I must do my errand down to the beach first, and I suppose I had better get about it and have it done with. Good-night, Mr. Mead."

Mead answered good-night, and Spinner left the room.

Trim stepped to the door and watched the professor as he went down the corridor and at last turned into the stairway leading to the hotel office.

"That's all right," he thought, "now to fool him."

He re-entered the banker's room and talking very rapidly said:

"Mr. Mead, it won't do for you to stay in this room another night.

"We could protect your life here but it would be much better to save you from unnecessary excitement, therefore, I'm going to transfer you at once to another room."

Trim had feared that Mead would make some objection to this arrangement, and he was greatly pleased, therefore, when the banker responded:

"It's a good idea, Carter, I was half thinking of the same thing myself.

"You might put me in another room with the professor to guard while you stay here to catch the criminal if he should make another attempt to come in."

Trim nodded.

"You've got the right kind of idea," he said. "Now for the transfer."

He stooped, got his arms under Mead and lifted him from the bed.

"What! right away?" cried Mead. "Why not wait and have the professor help?"

"Because that's not my way of doing business!" retorted Trim. "Open the door, Avery."

The landlord sprang to the door, opened it, crossed the corridor and opened a door on the opposite side.

Trim carried the banker easily across and laid him upon a bed in the other room.

"Now then, Avery," he said sharply, "you're to stay with Mr. Mead all through the night if necessary.

"You're not to leave him alone with anybody except me. Anybody, understand?"

"I do," responded Avery. "I've had enough dealings with Nick Carter to know that when a detective says a thing he means it."

"But I mean this if I never meant anything before in my life. I'm going to leave you, don't be at all alarmed if you don't see me again for a long time."

Avery nodded while Mead looked amazed.

"You're perfectly satisfied with Avery as your guard, aren't you?" asked Trim.

"Certainly," answered the banker. "I suppose you're leaving because you've got a clew——"

"It's all understood then?" interrupted Trim. "Good night."

With this he went out and re-entered the room from which he had just taken the banker.

The key to it was lying upon the bureau. Trim put it in his pocket and then made a thorough change in his appearance.

It took him but a moment to do this,

and when he was satisfied that his disguise would not be recognized, he locked the empty room behind him, went down through the hotel office and along the plank walk toward the beach.

"The professor thinks he has fixed things so that I will be shut up in Mead's room for the next few hours," thought Trim, "and if he's really up to any crooked business that will make him careless.

"If he is innocent I shall find him at the drug store, for that is where he said he was going.

"If he isn't innocent I ought not to have any difficulty in finding him because the worst thing he could do would be to attempt to conceal his movements.

"He will argue that the more openly he acts the safer it will be for him.

"I shall have to be pretty careful though about making inquiries, for if anybody should happen to tell him that a stranger was asking for him, he'd be likely to grow suspicious."

When Trim arrived at the drug store, which was near the railroad station, a glance within showed him that the professor was not there; so he continued on across the tracks and down a stretch lined on both sides with hotels.

A good many people were out enjoying the cool evening air.

Trim walked slowly, keeping his eyes open for the professor, when a man who was walking in the opposite direction spoke to him.

"Good evening, Mr. Johnson."

"Good evening," answered Trim, pleasantly, and he paused to have a short chat with this man whom he recognized as the policeman, who had had a hand in the affair at the depot on his arrival.

"I wonder who Mr. Johnson is?" thought Trim. "It's clear that I've made myself up to resemble somebody whom the officer knows.

"So much the better. I may be able to find out what I want without asking questions."

"Nice evening for a stroll," remarked the policeman.

"Splendid!" answered Trim, "and a good many people are thinking the same."

"Yes, there's more out for a walk tonight than there has been any time this season before."

"I suppose they're mostly on the beach?"

"Well yes, there's some there but a good many go up to the park on pleasant evenings like this."

Trim nodded, wondering where the park was.

The policeman evidently had nothing to say and was about to pass on when Trim made a chance shot in this way.

"By the way," he remarked, "did you notice the man who was walking with Professor Spinner?"

"Not particularly," the policeman answered.

"Good enough," thought Trim, "I've hit it right so far."

Aloud he said:

"I only caught sight of his back and wasn't certain, but I thought possibly I knew him."

"Like enough," the policeman answered, "I've seen him around here during the past few days, but never happened to hear his name called.

"He's a friend of the professor, I think who is staying at one of the hotels down here."

"I suppose by this time then that they are in a room at one of these hotels——"

"Oh, no!" interrupted the policeman. "They started down the beach toward Seaview," and he made a gesture with his hand toward the west.

"I think quite likely they're going to walk up into the park before they get through for that's a favorite walk.

"You could overtake them easily enough if you wanted to by going down the railroad tracks to the place where it crosses the road to the park, for they're pretty likely to go that way."

"Oh, no, it doesn't matter," Trim answered, "I've no acquaintance with the professor, and the man he's with may not be any friend of mine. I'll walk in the other direction."

Saying this Trim passed on. He was more than half satisfied that the professor was up to some crooked work, for he had believed when Spinner left the hotel that his errand to the drug store was a fake.

Trim thought then that it was more

likely that Spinner was going out to meet a confederate.

The conversation with the policeman helped to justify this theory to some extent.

After leaving the policeman Trim went on until he came to the beach.

It was a bright moonlight night and he could see that many persons were walking along the sands.

It was impossible to distinguish the professor's form or gait, but as the policeman had told him that Spinner had gone toward the west, Trim started in that direction.

As soon as he had got beyond the line of hotels he turned away from the beach and hurried across sand fields to the railroad tracks and so on until he came to a road leading to a forest at the top of a long slope.

There were two cottages along this road and it was dimly lighted by scattered street lamps.

As Trim came to the road he saw that two men were coming up from the direction of the beach.

He could not tell who they were and he lay flat upon the ground in the shadow of a tree to wait for them to pass.

They did so a moment later. Even then the detective could not see their faces, but he recognized the professor's voice, saying:

"I thought I should go to pieces when I was introduced to Carter, but the very next instant I saw that we were really playing in luck; for knowing that he is here we won't make any foolish mistake."

"I should hope not!" returned the other, gruffly, "but now that he is here we've either got to drop the thing or wind it up to-night before he tumbles——"

The rest of the remark was lost, for they had passed on out of hearing.

CHAPTER V.

THE PROFESSOR'S LESSON.

It need hardly be said that Trim followed the professor and his companion up the road.

He did not dare to come close enough to them to hear what was being said for if he should be discovered at that stage he would have no other chance to get at the bottom of the conspiracy against Mead.

It was not at all clear yet as to what this conspiracy meant, although there could be no doubt that it was some kind of scheme for getting possession of the banker's money.

On the way up the road the professor and his companion met several people returning.

Trim hoped that this would induce them to go somewhere where they could surely be alone, for that would give him a chance to get close to them.

At length they came to the edge of the forest and Trim, who was several rods behind them, saw them stop as if hesitating which way to go.

They were then at the corner of a road that would lead them if they followed it along the brow of a hill toward the Summit House.

The forest in front was the park to which the policeman had referred.

It was not a cultivated park but a wild place crossed by foot paths in various directions and with rough benches scattered here and there among the trees.

After a moment of hesitation the professor and his companion entered the forest, turning somewhat to the right as they did so.

When Trim came to the edge of the wood he saw that they had left the well beaten path that went in among the trees and were making their way through the undergrowth.

"Perhaps they've got some kind of a hiding place out here," thought Trim.

This did not prove to be the case. They were simply searching for some spot where they could carry on their conversation without interruption.

It was too dark among the trees to see their forms, but Trim could hear the twigs cracking underneath their feet and so he was able to follow them.

At length the sound of their footsteps ceased, but he could hear the murmur of their voices.

As there was great danger that he would be heard if he tried to get nearer to them, Trim stood still for a moment unable to form a plan for accomplishing his purpose.

As he looked around him he caught sight of a blue light at some distance. It was not in the direction of the professor.

"That looks like the light on a railroad switch," thought the detective. "I must be turned around for I didn't suppose the railroad was anywhere near here.

"If it is, maybe I can get nearer to them by walking along the tracks where there won't be any twigs to break underneath my feet."

He, therefore, withdrew cautiously from where he stood and made his way slowly toward the light.

It proved to be as he had at first thought, the light set in a switch.

There was a single track railroad there and this switch was for a short turn out.

"This is a branch road apparently," thought Trim, "and it leads straight into the woods.

"The professor must have stopped somewhere near it if I can judge at all by the direction."

He, therefore, went noiselessly over the ties until again he heard the murmur of voices ahead of him.

The moonlight made the tracks perfectly visible, but it was densely dark along each side.

Fearing that he might be seen walking along the tracks, Trim withdrew into the shadow at one side and then proceeded very cautiously.

The voices sounded clearer and clearer and he was just beginning to distinguish words when he came against somethiing.

As he was walking slowly the collision fortunately made no noise.

He appeared to have stumbled against a building of some kind.

It was hardly larger than a box and it seemed to Trim like the little sheds that are sometimes put up near switches on a railroad for the convenience of switch tenders or watchmen.

There was no switch near but as the detective looked back along the tracks he could see from the way the ties were placed that at one time there had been a turnout here.

Probably, therefore, this little shed was used for the switchman at that time and now it was abandoned.

Putting his hand around the corner and feeling along the side he found that the door was open, so he carefully leaped inside.

There was a square hole that had once been a window on the side looking down the tracks in the direction which he had been taking.

Not more than two rods ahead of him just in the edge between moonlight and shadow he saw two men seated upon a pile of sleepers.

It was their voices that he heard and he quickly recognized the professor's.

"If the stake wasn't so high, Duke, I should be inclined to drop the game and skip, for the Carters are not easily downed."

"I hope you're not weakening?" was the contemptuous retort.

"No, I'm not, but I tell you, Duke, that we've got to play our hands well and quickly or we're done for."

"That's what I've been telling you all along, aint it?" returned Duke.

"Yes, but with Scott in Portland there's danger of a misunderstanding and a slip somewhere that will be fatal."

"We could telegraph Scott?"

"The telegraph office was closed an hour ago."

"Then we could telegraph him early in the morning."

"It won't do."

"Why not?"

"If we telegraph him we've got to give away the address."

"That's so."

"Besides that, we couldn't say anything in a telegram that wouldn't be a dead give away. We ought to have fixed up a cipher long ago."

"I wish we had done so!"

"It's too late to wish for that now; might as well wish that Carter hadn't turned up."

"Confound him, anyway! But we mustn't forget that up to this time he's in the dark."

"That's so," thought Trim, "or you'd be able to see me in this little shed."

"He's to call me to take my turn at watching at one o'clock," said the professor, thoughtfully.

"Now we've cooked up those alarming attacks on Mead so well that there ought

ot to be any suspicion if Mead should ie during the night."

"Carter will suspect."

"Well, let him suspect, then; the thing as got to be done!"

"Yes, and the young fellow has got be done at the same time."

"That's right, and there's no use talking about it any longer."

The professor stood up, looked around moment and then added:

"I'll leave the young fellow to you, uke, and you can trust me to look after ead."

"Will you give him the poison?"

"Not much!"

"Why not, if you think people will ppose he died of fright?"

"Because Carter would surely demand post mortem examination that would reeal poison, and Carter would fix his susicions on me as the only one who could ve given the old man the dose."

"What will you do then?"

"I'll use the knife, and I'll tie myself d stick a gag in my mouth so that it'll ppear that I've been overcome in atmpting to defend Mead."

"Well, that's a good scheme if Carter esn't tumble to it."

"He won't tumble, and in any case the ing's got to be tried."

"It's understood then that Mead isn't wake up to-morrow morning?"

"Exactly, and you are to see to the d."

"I'll do it if I have to walk to Portland -night."

"I'll leave that to you for I've got ough troubles of my own to think out."

Duke now rose from the pile of sleepers d the two stood for a moment full in moonlight.

Trim got such a view of Duke's face at he believed he should know it again.

"Which way shall we go back?" asked ke.

"It seems to me we might as well not back together," returned the profes-. "Suppose you go back through the rk to the road and so down to the ch?

"I'll wait here until you've got a good rt and then I'll go along this road until I come to the road that leads to the Summit House."

"That suits me well enough," Duke responded. "So long."

He stepped into the shadow and Trim heard his footsteps growing fainter and fainter as he went through the park.

The professor sat down on the sleepers and waited for several minutes, then he rose again and started up the railroad.

Trim waited until he was beside the little shed, then he gave a cat-like leap out, threw one arm across the professor's throat, tripped him and bore him heavily to the ground.

The professor was greatly startled, but he struggled like a mad man.

Trim clutched him by the throat to prevent any possible outcry, for he did not want Duke to be made aware that the professor was in trouble.

Spinner clutched at Trim's throat, also.

He seemed to have the strength of a giant and for a moment Trim feared that he would get on his feet.

With one hand he could not ward off the professor's, and meantime Spinner was kicking wildly and wriggling over the ground in an effort to get away.

It was evidently a fight to the death so far as Spinner was concerned, and Trim had not dreamed that he would find him such a hard antagonist.

It was necessary to overcome him thoroughly and quickly, so Trim suddenly let go Spinner's throat and caught him by both wrists; then using all his force pressed the professor's arms back and brought his own head down sharply upon Spinner's temple.

Instantly the professor lay still and Trim stood up.

"That's a regular John L. Sullivan bucking dodge," he muttered, "and it hurts, too!"

Trim rubbed his head, which was aching from the blow he had given the professor.

"I hope I haven't knocked the life out of him," he thought.

He stooped over and felt of Spinner's heart. It was still beating and there was no doubt, therefore, that the man would come to consciousness again very soon.

Accordingly Trim laid him over on his

face, brought his hands behind him and fastened them together with handcuffs, then with a stout cord he bound his feet securely.

When this was done he lifted the professor up and carried him into the little shed, propping him against the walls in a corner.

Next Trim set his dark lantern upon the window shelf, turned the slide and cast its rays upon the professor's face.

Spinner was breathing heavily and gradually waking up.

When he did open his eyes a few minutes later he gave an exclamation of astonishment.

He was unable to stir. Hanging to a nail in the wall beside him he could see a small hand mirror.

In front of it he saw his own double in the act of clipping away some loose hair from his wig.

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed Spinner, "are you Carter or me, or who are you?"

"I am Professor Spinner from this time on," returned Trim comparing the reflection of his face in the mirror with the professor's.

"You're just a trifle taller than I am, professor," remarked Trim, "but I don't believe anybody will notice the difference.

"However, I can fix that by adding to my heels and making myself look a little slimmer than I am, see?"

The professor growled but said nothing.

"It'll be better for your health," continued Trim, "if you'll let me a little more into the scheme that you've rigged up against old Mead."

Spinner said nothing.

"Just as you think best," Trim went on, indifferently. "You're old enough to know a thing or two and I reckon this isn't the first crooked deal you've had a hand in.

"I've got you and I shall give you a long time to think that over, but if you want to turn state's evidence and get the advantage of it, now is your time to squeal, see?"

"You won't get a word out of me," muttered the professor, defiantly.

"All right, then, boss," returned Trim, smiling; "if I don't nobody else will."

With this he took a handkerchief and a large cork from his pocket.

Spinner saw what was coming and he shut his jaws hard together, but as he could move neither hand nor feet he could not make much resistance to the detective who pried his mouth open and pushed the cork in.

Trim then quickly bound the handkerchief over Spinner's mouth, leaving his nose free so he could breathe.

"You were speaking just now," remarked Trim, "of binding and gagging yourself so that the detective wouldn't tumble. I just thought I'd give you a lesson in that art.

"I don't know that I'm very much of a teacher but I've had some experience in this sort of thing, don't you know."

The professor glared at Trim fiercely and made a gurgling sound.

"Want to tell me something?" asked Trim. "If you do this is your last chance."

The professor shook his head savagely.

"Well," said Trim, and he calmly proceeded to take down his mirror, pack it up, put it in his pocket where he also stowed his make-up materials.

Then he took his lantern from the shelf, closed the slide and with a sarcastic "pleasant dreams, professor," stepped out upon the railroad track.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROFESSOR'S PUPIL.

Trim had taken much more time than usual with his make-up, for he knew how important it was that his identity should not be suspected by those who were in the habit of meeting the professor every day.

Therefore, he had been very careful to get every detail of Spinner's face accurately copied upon his own.

He did not take the trouble to exchange clothing with the man, for both wore business suits of the ordinary pattern and they were so much alike that it did not seem necessary to take that precaution.

Moreover, Trim wanted to keep on his own clothes, because in that way he

would be able to carry the many articles for which he might at any moment have need in his business.

All the detective's suits were made with a great number of pockets, many more than could be found in those supplied to ordinary customers.

Having left the professor in the little shed by the railroad tracks, Trim hurried with all speed to the Summit House.

While making up he had been thinking over the conversation he had heard, and although there was much about it that he could not wholly understand there was enough to show that not only Mead, but his son, was in danger.

"Just how they expect to profit by killing the son is more than I can see," thought Trim, as he ran on, "but there's no doubt that that's what they're up to.

"It couldn't have meant anything else when the professor agreed to attend to the banker and Duke undertook to look after the kid.

"That meant undoubtedly that both Mead and his son were to be killed to-night.

"Old Mead is safe now, for the professor can't stir until somebody goes and releases him, which isn't likely to happen yet a while, but young Edward may be in danger every minute.

"It would be too bad if I shouldn't get to the hotel ahead of Duke and so prevent the murder of the boy.

"I think I shall manage it for if Duke carries out his programme and goes around by the beach, it'll take him a long time to get to the hotel while I'm taking a short cut."

At this moment Trim rounded a shoulder of the hill and saw the lights on the Summit House veranda but a little way ahead of him.

He could have approached the hotel by a rear entrance, but he preferred to go in at the front.

He hoped that if Duke had already arrived at the hotel he would be hanging around there somewhere and seeing him, would mistake him for the professor and speak to him.

In that case Trim would have arrested the man promptly.

In order to play for this chance in the event he went down the slope across fields and through a group of cottages until he came to the lower end of the plank walk; then he went up just as if he were returning from a stroll upon the beach.

It was late in the evening then, nearly midnight, in fact, and few persons were stirring.

Three or four men were smoking in chairs upon the Summit House veranda and a few others were idling in the hotel office.

Nearly all the windows in the upper part of the hotel were dark, showing that the guests had gone to bed, but Trim noticed that there was a light in the room next to the one from which he had taken Banker Mead.

"That's young Edward's room," he thought, with a start. "Can it be that Duke has got there ahead of me and is even now committing murder?

"I shall be dreadfully sorry if that's the case, but if it is, I'll be sure to catch the murderer."

He hastened his pace and fairly jumped up the steps leading to the veranda.

As he came to the top he was considerably surprised to see young Edward Mead rise from a chair in the office and approach him.

"I thought you'd never come back, professor," said the young man. "I've been waiting for you a long time."

"And I thought you were asleep, Ned," returned Trim, imitating Spinner's voice.

"Oh, rats!" retorted Ned, in a low tone.

He added immediately afterward more loudly:

"I couldn't sleep and so I got up; I thought I'd wait for you so that you could tell me something more about the stars. It's such a clear night that we can see them fine from the end of the veranda."

"Well," thought Trim, "I've got to be a professor in earnest! Here's a pupil who wants some lessons in astronomy. I wonder how much I can tell him that he doesn't know already?

"I'll play the game out because it'll keep me near him. In that way I shall be able to protect him and perhaps I shall find it a good thing to take him into my confidence."

As he thought in this way Trim remembered the description that landlord Avery had given of young Mead.

"This boy seems bright enough," Trim went on to himself, "although he talks a little queerly for a fellow who is studying under a private tutor.

"For that matter, though, Professor Spinner may not have been the best sort of a teacher."

These thoughts went through Trim's mind while he was turning about to accompany Edward to the farther end of the veranda.

"We'll take snap shots at the moon, mugsy," remarked Edward, with a low laugh, as they walked along.

"Hey, what's that you're calling me?" demanded Trim, in real surprise.

It seemed strange to him that the banker's son should address his teacher in that familiar way and he believed it would be in keeping with the part he was playing to show some offense at it.

"O, come off!" retorted Edward, contemptuously. "Don't let's have anything of that kind when we're alone, see?"

"Ah!" thought Trim; "so the professor and the pupil are not quite on the same terms when they're in the presence of other people.

"All right, I reckon I can play my part in that kind of game, too."

Aloud he said:

"You mustn't be careless, Ned, somebody might happen to be standing behind any of these pillars or in the shadow of a doorway."

"I suppose so," Edward responded, in a lower tone; "that's why I wanted you to come out to the end of the veranda; but say!" and he pointed into the sky as if calling attention to a star; "you ain't as fly as you think you be."

"What's the matter now?" asked Trim.

"They've taken the old man to another room."

"You don't say so."

"I do, though, and that's what I got up for. I wanted to put you on to it."

"Aha!" thought Trim, "the banker's son is in it, is he? Well, this is a discovery! Avery evidently has misjudged this young fellow completely.

"Why! he seems to be as cold blooded a villain as the professor himself. I'll lead him on and see if he won't say something more damaging."

Accordingly Trim remarked:

"That was well done, Edward!"

To this the young fellow immediately replied:

"O, take a tumble and talk business, will you?"

Trim felt more and more amazed but he concealed his feelings completely.

"I am talking business!" he retorted, as if offended. "How did you get on to the fact, and who did it?"

"I got on to it by peeking into the old man's room a little while ago to see if you were there. It was dead empty."

"Indeed! Well, who took the old man away?"

"I don't know, unless——"

"Where did they take him?"

"I don't know that, either."

"Pooh!" exclaimed Trim.

"Now what are you givin' us?" cried Edward, impatiently. "You act as if you didn't care anything about it while I should think that it was something mighty important."

"Perhaps it is!" returned Trim.

"I told you you wasn't fly," continued Edward, "and here's something more for you to think of."

"Well, what is it?"

"You know when we went into the room together?"

"I remember."

"There was two men standing there?"

"Yes."

"Well, I'll bet one of them was a detective."

"A detective?"

"Yes, I'll bet the old man has been so scared that he got a fellow down from Portland to take care of him.

"I tell you what it is, boss, you've got to look sharp or we'll all be done."

"Is that all you've got to say?" asked Trim.

"Well, ain't it enough?" retorted Edward. "Here's the old man taken to another room, and you don't know where he's gone, and I more than half suspect that a detective did it."

Trim chuckled.

"Now what are you giving us?" demanded Edward again.

"Why, I'll tell you something, sonny," Trim answered. "I knew before you told me that the old man had been taken to another room, and I knew who did it, and I also know that it was a detective, and worse yet, that that detective was one of the Carters from New York!"

"Gee whiz!"

The young fellow turned very pale and looked around wildly.

"Say!" he whispered, "but those Carters can do anything! They can hear a fellow think when he's a mile away."

"I told you," said Trim, solemnly, "that you ought not to speak so loud."

"Well, why didn't you give me the tip that Carter was around?"

Trim shrugged his shoulders.

"I wish I was out of this," added Edward.

Trim looked hard at the young fellow for several seconds. His thoughts were very busy and they had taken an entirely new turn.

Was it possible that the banker's son had been induced to be treacherous to his father, and that the conspirators were intending through him to get possession of the old man's property?

Was it also possible that having got possession of the property they were going to kill the son? Was this what the conspiracy meant?

Trim rapidly recalled the conversation he had heard in the park.

He remembered that the banker had drawn his will so that the son should get immediate possession of the fortune.

The money being in the hands of the son after the old man's death, it would then be possible to think that the professor and his confederates would treacherously kill the son.

But why should they plot to kill the son to-night? There must be something further in the conspiracy than Trim had yet suspected, and as he stood there looking at Edward the truth dawned upon him suddenly.

"I'll teach you a lesson in snap shots young fellow" he said to himself.

Aloud he said:

"You see you weren't able to tell me anything after all. Now the business has got to be done at once!"

"But how are you going to do it with Carter on deck?" asked the young man.

"I'll manage that!" was the detective's reply. "Let's go up to your room and look the field over."

Trim caught Edward by the arm but the latter shrank away.

"I don't want to go up there!" he said. "I think I'd rather clear out while there's a chance."

"No! no!" answered Trim roughly. "The game is still in our hands; I've been talking it all over with Duke and we've decided to go ahead."

"Duke says so, does he?"

"Yes, he's looking out for his share in the job now."

"Well, he's got an easier one than you have."

"No matter, I can do my part. I want you to come upstairs with me."

The young man still held back and Trim turned upon him roughly.

"See here," he whispered, "you mustn't show any signs of making a row now, for there are men loafing around in the office and if they see you acting in any unusual way they'll tumble to it and report you to Carter as soon as he begins to make inquiries."

"All right," returned Edward, "I suppose I must make a bluff for it. Come on."

Together then they walked down the veranda to the main office and so through the office and upstairs to the room that the banker had formerly occupied.

Trim unlocked it and they went in.

"I know where the old man is," said Trim, then, "and I'm going to take a look in on him. You stay here until I come back."

"I will," was the reply.

"I think you will, too!" returned Trim, opening the door of a closet. "Come here a minute."

The young fellow came forward and Trim gave him a quick shove which sent him to the further side of the closet.

The detective then shut the door and locked it.

"Keep quiet, now, young man," he commanded. "I shall be back here within five minutes and I'm putting you in there to make sure that you don't get scared and fly the coop, see?"

"Don't go back on me, boss," the young man whimpered.

"I shan't, but see that you keep quiet."

With this parting command Trim left the room and crossed the corridor to the room where he had left the banker and Avery.

He tried the door and found it locked, but it was opened for him immediately by the landlord.

"O, hello, professor!" said Avery, in a tone of surprise. "I didn't expect you so early. Carter has gone out and left me in charge during his absence."

Trim looked over Avery's shoulder and saw that the banker was asleep.

"How is Mead?" he asked, in his natural voice.

Avery started and fell back a pace.

"What did you say?" he asked.

Trim came in laughing, and closed the door.

"I asked how Mead was," he said, "but you needn't bother to answer, for I can see that he's getting on well."

"For heaven's sake!" exclaimed Avery, "you're not Professor Spinner, are you?"

Trim shook his head, still laughing.

"Well," said Avery, "if I hadn't been so well acquainted with Nick Carter, I shouldn't have known what to make of this, but I'll give you warning, young fellow, that you can't deceive anybody even with that very fine disguise if you don't modify your voice."

"I'm surprised to hear you say so!" responded Trim, assuming the tones in which Spinner spoke.

"Huh! you're equal to it, I see," said Avery. "Now tell me what's the game?"

"I haven't got time to tell you very much about it," Trim answered quickly, as he turned to an electric button on the wall and pressed it.

"What's that for?" asked the landlord.

"When the night clerk or the hall boy answers that call," Trim replied, "tell him to harness the fastest horse you have in your stable to the lightest wagon and have it ready for me in the shortest possible time."

"All right."

"Now tell me the way to Portland."

Avery gave Trim careful directions as to the roads that lay between Old Orchard and Portland and by the time he had finished a hall boy was at the door.

The landlord then gave the instructions that Trim had asked for and turned again to the detective.

"You asked what the game was," said Trim. "I presume by this time you've guessed who is the chief conspirator against old Mead?"

"Then there is a conspiracy, hey?"

"Yes, and a very strong one."

"And is Professor Spinner——"

"Of course."

"Then he's a keen one and dangerous, too, Trim."

"He isn't dangerous any longer. You know the branch railroad that runs out through the park?"

"Certainly."

"Perhaps you don't know that there's a little shanty some distance out where there used to be a switch?"

"I don't remember any such building, but if you say there is one——"

"Send three or four men that you can trust to that shanty."

"Now?"

"Well, before morning; that is, if you've got a good lockup at the beach."

"I believe it's strong enough, but we've got a room in the cellar here that's better."

"Then put the professor in it."

"Certainly, but where is the professor?"

"In that shanty I speak of; he's bound hand and foot and so can't get away, but as long as he's there it's barely possible that some of his confederates may find him and release him, so you'd better put him in your cellar room for safe keeping.

"You can take the gag out of his mouth after you've once got him inside, but I wouldn't remove his hand cuffs or the cords about his legs, for as you say he's keen and dangerous."

"All right, Trim, I shall see that your instructions are followed carefully. I suppose you want me to keep on guard with old Mead through the rest of the night?"

"Yes, until I'm through with my trip to Portland. It wouldn't be safe to leave

him alone for a minute; you see I don't know how many there are in this thing."

"All right, I won't stir from this room. But what shall I say to Mead's son, Edward?"

"You needn't say anything to Edward," Trim answered, with a queer smile, "and you won't need to, for Edward is going with me."

Avery looked as if he would like to ask a lot of questions, but Trim did not look as if he would make any replies.

Moreover at this moment there was a knock at the door. A hall boy was there to say that the carriage was ready and Trim immediately left the room.

CHAPTER VII.

A RACE TO PORTLAND.

Trim told the hall boy to have the carriage brought around to the rear entrance.

"All right, professor," the boy responded as he started down the corridor.

Trim re-entered the room, formerly occupied by Banker Mead. He went at once to the closet where Edward was a prisoner and opened the door.

"I told you I'd be back," he said in a whisper.

"Gee whiz; but I was afraid you was going to shake me," the young man answered.

"Well, you see I'm not and I want you to understand that I'm doing pretty well by you. I could have left you here to face the trouble alone, but——"

"Is the game up?" asked Edward in a night.

"We've got to scoot!" Trim answered. "I was in the room where the old man is——"

"Was Carter in there?"

"He was," Trim answered with perfect truth, "and we haven't got any time to lose."

The young fellow was trembling violently.

"Brace up now," Trim commanded, harshly. "I've got things all fixed so that we can get away, but you've got to put on a front and go down through the hotel office as if nothing had happened."

"All right, I'll do as well as I can. Let's not lose any time."

There were but two or three men in the hotel office when they passed through and these were so busily engaged in conversation that they paid no attention to Trim and his companion. At the back door they found an open buggy awaiting them. The horse was evidently spirited and speedy.

Young Edward climbed in at once and Trim followed, taking the reins.

The horse started at a fast gait, his footsteps sounding loud upon the road.

"Gee!" exclaimed Edward, under his breath, "but won't Carter hear this noise and be suspicious?"

"He will hear it if he can hear a man think a mile away!" returned Trim.

"But won't he follow us?"

"I guess not, if he does we've got the fastest horse in the stables."

"How did you manage it?"

"I'll tell you a little later."

Edward clung to the seat and for a while remained silent. Trim could see that he was chattering with fear.

They had gone about a mile from the hotel when the detective decided that it would be best to spring the trap that he had prepared for his companion before he should entirely recover from his fright.

"I want you to drive the rest of the way," he said, passing the reins over to Edward.

"What me?"

"I said you, didn't I?"

The detective was speaking in his natural tones and the young fellow noticing the difference tried to see Trim's face more clearly.

The moon was still shining brightly and to the young man's eyes it was the professor who seemed to be sitting beside him.

"What's come over you, boss?" he asked, "you didn't talk like that before!"

"That was because I was afraid Trim Carter might recognize me," answered Trim.

The young fellow was evidently getting more and more frightened. His hands shook on the reins and the horse feeling the difference in the drivers slackened his pace.

"Keep that horse moving!" commanded Trim, sternly.

"What—what—what do you mean?"

"Don't go back on me, boss," the young man whimpered.

"Now tell me the way to Portland.'

Trim reached for the whip, gave the horse a light tap with it, and immediately they were rushing on at a race track speed.

"Don't spare the horse now, but look here a minute!" said Trim.

With this he took his lantern from his pocket and drew the slide so that the rays fell upon his own face.

"Who am I?" he asked.

"I suppose you're Dan Wade!" the young fellow stammered, "the one who's been going as Professor Spinner."

"Dan Wade, alias Professor Spinner," responded Trim, "is a prisoner captured this night by Trim Carter, the detective."

Edward shuddered.

"Look at me!" commanded Trim again.

He raised his eyes with an expression of awful fear.

"And I'm Trim Carter, the detective."

At this the driver almost lost control of himself. He trembled so violently that he could not possibly hold the reins firmly.

"Don't be hard on me," he blubbered; "I hadn't done anything yet."

"You're in it as deep as any of them!" retorted Trim, "but there's just one thing you can do to save your neck."

"I'll do it if I can."

"Then drive me to the place where the real Edward Mead is kept a prisoner waiting to be murdered by Duke."

"He—he may not be there now," whined the young fellow.

"And he may be murdered before we can get there!" cried Trim. "If you don't keep that horse going at his best, and remember at the first sign of any treachery on your part I'll send you across the river. Do you catch on?"

Trim shut the slide of his lantern and showed the gleaming barrel of a revolver as he spoke.

"I'll do the best I can," was the faint reply.

Trim smiled quietly as he saw the young fellow take the whip and tighten his hold upon the reins.

The horse was making his best speed now, but if he was kept up to it he would never last long enough to reach Portland.

Accordingly after a little, Trim ordered his companion to ease up a bit, and from that time their speed was only such as the horse could endure for hours.

The detective was filled with anxiety throughout the entire journey.

He understood now the full meaning of the conversation he had heard in the park.

If he had realized it sooner he would have taken less time in making up to represent the professor, for he would have known that every moment was precious.

Telegraphing to Portland undoubtedly meant that the professor and Duke had a confederate there who was merely waiting for orders to put an end to the banker's son.

This man in the buggy with Trim was a criminal who either resembled the son remarkably or who had been made up to resemble him.

It was clear to Trim that the real son had been abducted and this fellow substituted in his place.

When the change was made he was not yet clear, but he cared little for that detail as long as he knew that the real son was in danger and that Duke was already on his way to bring about his murder.

Duke had said that he would attend to the matter that night.

As there were no trains from Old Orchard before morning, it seemed entirely probable that Duke would have hired a horse and carriage to take him across the country.

"He spoke of walking," thought Trim, "but that was a mere bluff, and under the circumstances I don't believe he'd wait for the train.

"He's probably ahead of me somewhere on the road now, and if I don't overtake him, or have some kind of good luck, I'm afraid that it'll be rough on the banker's son."

Trim calculated that they could get to Portland at about daybreak unless some accident should happen to delay them.

He allowed his companion to drive in silence for several miles and then began to ask him questions.

"I might as well know all this now as later," he said, "what's your name?"

'Jim Spark," was the reply.

'All right, Jim, how long has this game been going on?'

Since early in the spring."

"Who got it up?'

"Wade."

"Go ahead and tell me about it."

"Well," said Spark, "Wade is a man who has read and traveled a good deal, but he's done crooked work more than once.

"He knew that old Mead was looking for a private tutor for his son, who hasn't got any too much brains.

"Wade had seen young Mead and he noticed how much I looked like him.

"He knew something about old Mead, too, and so he wrote to the banker, asking for the job of private tutor.

"He called himself Professor Spinner, and put on such a good front that Mead hired him."

"How long ago was that?" asked Trim.

"Oh, that was some weeks ago. It was when Mead was in Boston. His scheme at first was to kidnap the son and get a reward for restoring him somehow, but he changed his first plan after he had been living with Mead for a while, and so he got Duke and Scott to join him in this other scheme."

"It's this other scheme I'm most interested in," said Trim.

"You know all about it already, don't you?"

"Suppose I do, I want you to tell me."

"Well, they were looking for a chance to get rid of young Mead and put me in his place for a long time.

"They couldn't get it as long as Mead stuck to the city, but when he came to Old Orchard to stay for the summer they saw their chance. They went to Old Orchard too——"

"And while they were there," remarked Trim, suddenly, "they kept themselves in pocket money by thieving, didn't they?"

"Yes," admitted Spark, "that was their regular line as crooks. They just kept their hands in while waiting for Wade to get the game ready.

"Wade had learned all about old Mead's money and knew that he hadn't made a will. So he set out to frighten the old man.

"While Mead and the son were asleep, Duke got out onto the veranda through Wade's room and so entered Mead's.

"He didn't hurt the old man very much but he did his best to scare him to death.

"Next day Wade helped the scheme along by telling Mead there must be a conspiracy against him."

"I see!" said Trim, "and on the next evening when Wade and the son went out for a walk Duke entered the room again in the same way to give him another scare?"

"That was it. The scheme was to scare him first into making his will and murder him afterward."

"I understand," said Trim, "and after Mead was murdered you were to step in as the son and claim his fortune."'

"'That was it; we had it all cooked up, and last evening I changed places with Mead's son."

"How did you manage it?"

"Wade was sitting in Mead's room with the son and just before the time came for the last train to go to Portland he spoke about being sleepy and needing the air.

"We thought it was mighty lucky that old Mead himself told Wade to go out for a walk with his son. Wade would have gone anyway, you understand, but as it was he went naturally. He took the son with him."

"Yes," said Trim, "I saw them go down from the hotel veranda myself."

"And you didn't suspect anything then, I suppose."

"No matter whether I did or not. Go on with your story."

"Well, I was on that train that was coming in. I had boarded it two or three stations below; as soon as it got to the station I jumped off and mixed in with the crowd.

"Scott was on board, too. We had a state room in a parlor car. He put his head out of the window and yelled, 'Hello, Ned! come in and see a fellow a minute.'

"'There's some friend who wants to speak to you, Ned,' says Wade, to the boy.

"Now you see, the boy hadn't seen who spoke to him, but he supposed it was all right, especially as Wade said so, and so he climbed aboard the train, looking for a friend.

"Scott opened the door of the state

room and said, 'Here we are, come in a minute.' Ned walked in wondering, I suppose, who his friend was, and I suppose you can guess te rest."

"I suppose I can," answered Trim, gravely. "Scott had some kind of drug with him with which he put young Edward to sleep and while the train took him on to Portland you were returning with Wade, alias the professor, to the hotel."

"That's it," admitted Spark, "and I've told you the whole truth, so help me."

"Wade told you what to say when you went into Mead's room, didn't he?"

"Yes, I had rehearsed that over and over, but I came near breaking down when I was in the room, though, because I had forgotten which was the way to my own room."

"I remember now," said Trim, "that you seemed a little puzzled, but that doesn't matter. When this thing comes to trial I'll see that you get the full benefit of having told me the truth, provided you get me to Portland in time to save young Mead."

"I'm doing the best I know how."

For some time after this they rode on in silence. At length it began to grow light and just as they came to the top of the hill they saw the roofs of Portland in the distance.

A half mile or so ahead of them was a man on horseback going toward the city.

"Say," exclaimed Spark, "but I'll bet that's Duke."

Trim had not been able to see Duke clearly enough in the moonlight to tell at this distance whether this was the same man or not, but it seemed probable.

He, therefore, commanded Spark to drive faster, and for the next few minutes the horse was again urged to his uttermost.

The horseman disappeared around a turn as they came to a long slope leading up to the city and Trim allowed the speed to decrease.

He believed there was time now to accomplish the rescue of the banker's son, for it was probable that Duke, if it was him on horseback, would not hurry, and that he would go to arouse the confederate somewhere before proceeding to commit the fatal deed.

As they passed the Union station Trim asked where the boy was confined.

"Over by the steamboat docks," was the answer.

That was a long mile away up and down hill. The horseman was not in sight ahead of them, or upon any of the streets they passed, and Trim began to feel anxious again.

As they went down the main street past Preble House, and a little after that past the Falmouth, Trim began to doubt whether they would arrive in time.

Spark had told him that young Mead was confined in a sail loft and that Scott had engaged a room in a cheap boarding house near by.

The detective could not understand why he had not come in sight of the horseman again and he feared that the horseman was not Duke.

"I'm afraid Duke had too much of a start of me," he thought, "and that the worst has happened."

Presently they turned from the main street toward the harbor and went down a steep hill.

At the bottom of the hill they saw two men walking in the direction that they were taking. One of them was Duke.

"There they are," exclaimed Spark.

"Then it was Duke on horseback," said Trim.

"Yes, he must have taken a cut around the hill to save climbing it."

"Why didn't you drive the same way, then?"

"I didn't think of it."

"Now see here, Spark," explained Trim, pressing the muzzle of his revolver against the young fellow's cheek, that wasn't business.

"I'll lay out the whole three of you, if necessary, but if I have to shoot you'll be the first one—understand?"

"I didn't go for to do you any trick," stammered Spark in great terror, "I just didn't think of going around the hill, so help me."

"Well, you see that you think straight from now on."

At that moment the two men half passed before a rough looking building;

and one of them took out a key to unlock the door.

"Call to them!" said Trim.

Spark accordingly shouted, "Hey, there!"

The two men looked up suddenly and waited for them, recognizing Spark and supposing that they recognized the professor.

"I'll do the talking," said Trim in a low tone. "You obey orders."

A moment later they drew up before Duke and Scott and Trim climbed down.

"Hitch the horse, Jim," he said, "and come in with us."

"Has anything gone wrong?" asked Duke, nervously.

"Oh, no, it's all right, the old man——"

"He's fixed, I tell you."

"What about Carter, then?"

"I attended to Carter first," replied Trim, with a grim smile.

"What made you come on to Portland, then?"

"I wanted to make sure that you did your part."

"That wasn't necessary; and besides that you must have left things in a queer way at the beach with both of you out of sight and two men mur——"

"Bah! bah!" Trim interrupted. "Dead men tell no tales. Let's come in and finish, then I can tell you what's happened."

Duke's companion, the one who has been spoken of as Scott, unlocked the door and all went inside.

They entered what seemed to be a carpenter shop from which a flight of stairs led to the loft above.

Trim and Duke went up these stairs, side by side, and the others came after, Spark being the last to start.

He had just put his foot on the bottom step when Trim arrived at the top.

One glance showed Trim the banker's son lying upon a heap of sail cloth unconscious.

His hands and feet were bound and he was undoubtedly still under the influence of a drug.

The instant he saw this Trim turned quickly about and gave Duke a swinging blow squarely upon the jaw.

Duke instantly toppled backward and as he was falling Trim gave him another blow.

Scott, who was close behind, lost his balance through Duke's falling upon him and Spark had to leap aside to save himself from being knocked over by the pair who came tumbling down the stairs.

Trim followed them down as fast as he could, arriving there just as Scott, who was not seriously injured, picked himself up and seizing a carpenter's mallet upon a bench aimed a blow at the detective.

"Whoever you are," Scott cried, "I'll brain you!"

Trim warded off the blow with his left hand and lunged forward with his right, catching Scott between the eyes.

The scoundrel staggered back and fell full length upon the floor; Spark meantime stood by too terrified to help either the detective or his confederates.

"Here you are!" said Trim, passing him a pair of handcuffs, "fix them on Duke."

The latter was slowly trying to get on his feet. He had been stunned by the blow on the forehead and was now so dizzy that he could hardly see.

Spark, therefore, had no difficulty in putting handcuffs upon him, and Trim had little further trouble with Scott.

With his revolvers in his hands he drove the men from the building and made them march ahead of him until he met a policeman who led them all to a station.

When the prisoners had been locked up and charges had been entered against them the detective returned to the sail loft and took away young Mead.

He had not been seriously injured, and he was in as good condition as ever when Trim brought him back to the Summit House at Old Orchard later in the day.

The conspiracy against Banker Mead was broken up, and with the arrest of the criminals there was an end of the petty thieving that had annoyed Avery and other hotel keepers at the beach.

Curiously enough the end of the conspiracy brought an end to Banker Mead's ill health. He no longer believed that death was near and he picked up rapidly. It could never be proven, but it seemed

probable that his illness had been due partly to slow poison given to him with his food by the professor.

The banker's gratitude to Trim knew no bounds. There were tears in his eyes when he grasped Trim's hand in both his own and stammered:

"You've given me two lives, young man; my own and my boy's. Money doesn't count in such matters. I couldn't pay you enough if I owned the world, and I couldn't thank you sufficiently if I lived to be a thousand."

Trim, of course, assured the banker that he understood, that he was glad he had succeeded, and so on, and at length got away and returned to New York. He had already received his regular fee in the form of a check, but shortly after his arrival at home an express messenger brought him a magnificent diamond pin with a brief note from Mr. Meade.

"Just as a keepsake from one who can never forget your kindness, shrewdness and daring," the note read.

[THE END.]

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